

Plato's Republic

The Republic (Greek: Πολιτεία, Politeia; Latin: Res Publica) is a Socratic dialogue, written by Plato around **380 BC**.

It is concerning justice, the order and character of the just city-state and the just man.

It is Plato's Defense of Justice. In response to Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus, Socrates seeks to show that it is always in an individual's interest to be just, rather than unjust.

Thus, one of the most pressing issues regarding the **Republic** is whether Socrates defends justice successfully or not.

What is Justice?

Justice according to Thrasymachus

He attacks Socrates' position that justice is an important good. He claims that 'injustice, if it is on a large enough scale, is stronger, freer, and more masterly than justice' (344c). ... Justice is nothing but the advantage of another (343c).

Plato's Definition of Justice?

After criticizing the conventional theories of **justice** presented differently by Cephalus, Polymarchus, Thrasymachus and Glaucon, **Plato** gives us his own theory of **justice** according to which, individually, **justice** is a 'human virtue' that makes a person self-consistent and good; socially.

Justice is a sort of specialization.

It is simply the will to fulfill the duties of one's station and not to meddle with the duties of another station, and its habitation is, therefore, in the mind of every citizen who does his duties in his appointed place.

It is the original principle, laid down at the foundation of the State

"that one man should practice one thing only and that the thing to which his nature was best adopted".

True justice to Plato, therefore, consists in the principle of **non-interference**.

The State has been considered by Plato as a perfect whole in which each individual which is its element, functions not for itself but for the health of the whole.

Every element fulfils its appropriate function. Justice in the platonic state would, therefore, be like that harmony of relationship where the Planets are held together in the orderly movement.

Plato was convinced that a society which is so organized is fit for survival. Where man are out of their natural places, there the co-ordination of parts is destroyed, the society disintegrates and dissolves.

Justice, therefore, is the citizen sense of duties.

- A part of human virtue and the bond, which joins man together in society.
- It is the identical quality that makes good and social .
- An order and duty of the parts of the soul, it is to the soul as health is to the body.
- Plato says that justice is not mere strength, but it is a harmonious strength.
- Not the right of the stronger but the effective harmony of the whole

All moral conceptions revolve about the good of the whole-individual as well as social.

Plato divides his just society into three classes

The producers

The auxiliaries

The guardians

The **auxiliaries** are the warriors

They are responsible for defending the city from invaders, and for keeping the peace at home.

They must enforce the convictions of the guardians, and ensure that the producers obey.

Guardian The guardians are responsible for ruling the city. They are chosen from among the ranks of the auxiliaries, and are also known as philosopher-kings.

Producers The producing class is the largest class of society; it is a catch-all group that includes all professions other than warrior and ruler.

Framers and craftsmen are producers, as are merchants, doctors, artists, actors, lawyers, judges, and so forth. In a just society, the producers have no share in ruling, but merely obey what the rulers decree. They focus exclusively on producing whatever it is that they are best suited to produce (whether that be metal work, agriculture, shoes, or furniture).

Some Important Terms in Plato's Republic

Aporia *Aporia* is the Greek term for the state of helplessness—the inability to proceed—that ends all of Plato's early dialogues.

Appetite Necessary desires, which should be indulged (such as the desire to eat enough to stay alive), unnecessary desires, which should be limited (such as the desire to eat a ten pound sirloin steak at every meal), and unlawful desires, which should be suppressed at all costs (such as the desire to eat one's children).

Though the appetite lusts after many things, Plato dubs it “money-loving,” since money is required for satisfying most of these desires. In a just man, the appetite is strictly controlled by reason and reason's henchman, spirit.

Elenchus *Elenchus* is the Greek term for Socrates's method of questioning

Epistemology The branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge, belief, and thought.

Epistemological questions include:

What is knowledge?

How do we form beliefs based on evidence?

Can we know anything?

Form According to Plato's metaphysical theory, there is an aspect of reality beyond the one which we can see, an aspect of reality even more real than the one we see.

This aspect of reality, the intelligible realm, is comprised of unchanging, eternal, absolute entities, which are called "Forms." These absolute entities—such as Goodness, Beauty, Redness, Sourness, and so on

Kallipolis A Greek term for Plato's just city

Pleonexia A Greek term meaning "the desire to have more"

Sophist The Sophists were teachers-for-hire who educated the wealthy men of Athens in the fifth century B.C